

THE CONSOLIDATION COMMISSION PREPARES A NEW BILL.

It Proposes to Leave the Preparation of a Charter with the Legislature After the People Affected Have Voted on the Question—A Copy of the Proposed Bill—Enthusiastic Expressions of Views by the Commissioners.

A genuine praise meeting was held yesterday at the office of the commission to make plans for consolidating this city and its outlying communities into the "greater New-York."

There were two subjects for profound mutual congratulation on the part of Andrew A. Green and his associates in the great work of binding together the citizens of the metropolitan community.

The first subject for praise was the recent election in Brooklyn, which "typhooned," to use Mr. Green's enthusiastic expression—a number of Legislators to Albany from the City of Churches, who are in favor of and who are pledged to their constituents to vote for the consolidation of that city and its suburbs with New-York.

The second subject for congratulation was the completion and unanimous indorsement at yesterday's meeting of a bill which, it is believed by the commission, will carry the project of the "greater New-York" a long way toward final accomplishment.

This bill, which was prepared by J. S. T. Stranahan, Andrew H. Green, and Edward F. Linton, provides for what is regarded by the commission as an easy, simple, and speedy way for bringing the subject of consolidation before the people interested.

The bill does not contain the features which proved objectionable to the last two Legislatures. In effect, it provides that the residents of the territory which it is proposed to annex shall be given an opportunity to vote for or against consolidation at the next general election.

All that the next Legislature is to be asked to do is to give the people a chance to vote on the question. The entire privilege of granting consolidation is to rest with the Legislature. After the people have spoken at the poles, the Legislature is still left free to do as it sees fit in the matter.

The present bill does not reserve to the Consolidation Commission the right to draw a charter for the "greater New-York." That provision was in the bill submitted to the Legislature last year. It proved a stumbling block to its passage.

By the new act, the "greater New-York" is to comprise New-York City, Brooklyn and all of Kings County, Staten Island, Long Island City, Flushing, Newtown, Jamaica, a part of Hempstead, L. I., all of the town of Westchester, and the southern parts of the towns of East Chester and Pelham.

The people of New-York City are alone to vote on the question of taking in all of the surrounding territory named in the bill. They cannot discriminate against any of the contiguous communities. The people in Brooklyn and in all the other places in the "greater New-York," except this city, are merely to vote as to whether or not they want their particular territory to be taken in.

For instance, the residents of Staten Island may vote against their consolidation with New-York. On the other hand, the residents of Long Island City might vote for consolidation.

In this way, as is proposed by the Consolidation Commission, the Legislature will be able to learn exactly who are anxious to come in and who are not.

The Legislature is to be left free to take the votes of the various communities as a guide, in fixing the boundaries of the "greater New-York," in case consolidation is determined on by that body. It is not to be bound to the limits of territory named by the Consolidation Commission in its bill.

There is already a strong and organized sentiment in Brooklyn in favor of consolidation. There is said to be an equally strong sentiment for consolidation in Long Island City.

According to a report made yesterday to the commission by James A. Townsend of Bay Ridge, L. I., the subjects of Shore Inspector Cornelius Furgueson are tired of his misrule, and are, by a large majority, in favor of "annexation to something," with no prejudice against making New-York that "something."

Although yesterday's meeting of the Consolidation Commission was brief, it was regarded by the members as one of the most encouraging and important in the history of that organization.

The commission met in the office of Andrew H. Green, 214 Broadway. There were present, beside Chairman Green, "First Citizen" J. S. T. Stranahan of Brooklyn, State Engineer and Surveyor Martin Schenck, Frederic W. Devoe, George J. Greenfield, John L. Hamilton, Edward F. Linton, Calvert Vaux, and Secretary Albert E. Henschel.

After the usual short formality of reading the minutes of the previous meeting, President Green brought forth the new bill for a "greater New-York."

Mr. Green spoke in terms of the highest satisfaction and encouragement concerning the bill. Its provisions were simple, he said, and provided merely for submitting the whole question of consolidation to the people. The bill contained none of the extraneous and objectionable features of previous bills submitted by the commission to the Legislature. In plain terms it defined the proposed boundaries of the territory to be consolidated, and provided for the machinery by which a popular expression of opinion on the subject could be obtained.

Alluding to the recent political upheaval in Brooklyn, Mr. Green said the commission found peculiar cause for rejoicing over the "typhoon" in the City of Churches. A number of men pledged to a popular vote on consolidation had been elected to the Legislature—"typhooned" to the Legislature—from Brooklyn.

Mr. Green pointed out that the especially objectionable feature of the previous bill, giving the commission the power to draft a charter for the "greater New-York," had been omitted from the new bill, thus adding greatly to its acceptability to the Legislature and to the politicians of both New-York and Brooklyn.

It was this obnoxious section which Mayor Boody of Brooklyn especially urged against it at the last Legislature. The Mayor sent Corporation Counsel Jenks to Albany to say that he was willing to give the people of Brooklyn a chance to vote on the subject of consolidation, but he did not want the Consolidation Commission to draw the charter for the "greater New-York."

The bill submitted by President Green to the commission was as follows:

An act providing for the submission of the question of consolidation of the City of New-York with certain territory, under a single administration, to a vote of the people.

The people of the State of New-York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The territory referred to in this act is as follows, to wit: The City of New-York, Long Island City, the County of Kings, the County of Richmond, the towns of Westchester, Flushing, Newtown, and Jamaica, and that portion of the towns of East Chester and Pelham which lie southerly of a straight line drawn from the point where the northerly line of the City of New-York meets the centre line of the Bronx River, to the middle of the channel between Hunter's and Glen Islands, in Long Island Sound, and that part of the town of Hempstead which is westerly of a straight line drawn from the southeasterly point of the town of Flushing, through the middle of the channel between Rockaway Beach and Shelter Island to the Atlantic Ocean.

Sec. 2. At the next general election held in this State there shall be submitted to a vote of the duly qualified electors of the said territory the question of its consolidation under one municipal government; and for this purpose, there shall be prescribed by the proper authorities, in each election district therein, separate ballots, as hereinafter described, and separate ballot boxes, in the manner and by the persons as required by the provisions of Chapter 689 of the Laws of 1892, entitled, "An act in relation to the elections, constituting Chapter 6

of the General Laws," and any act or acts amendatory thereof or supplementary thereto, for the submission of a constitutional amendment or other proposition or question to a popular vote. One half of the number of said ballots shall read, "For Consolidation," and the other half of the number of said ballots shall read, "Against Consolidation," and the indorsement on said ballots shall read, "Consolidation." Each elector shall be provided, in addition to the other ballots furnished at said election, with two ballots, one of which shall be "for" and the other "against" said consolidation. All the provisions of said Chapter 689 of the Laws of 1892 relating to the submission of a constitutional amendment or other proposition or question to a popular vote shall, in all respects, be followed, complied with, applied to, and carried into effect in the submission of said proposition or question of consolidation to a popular vote as herein provided; and no ballots on said proposition or question shall be deemed invalid by reason of any error in dimensions, style of printing, or other formal defect, or by having been deposited in a wrong ballot box, but all such ballots shall be canvassed and returned as if said error or formal defect had not existed, or as if they had been deposited in the box required for that purpose. The ballots cast in each of said election districts, except in the City of New-York, shall be deemed and taken as an expression of the voters, as the case may be, in favor of or against the consolidation with the City of New-York of the city, county, village, town, or part of a town mentioned in the first section, in which the said district is situated, and the ballots cast upon said proposition or question in the City of New-York shall be deemed and taken as an expression of the voters, as the case may be, in favor of or against the consolidation of the territory mentioned in Section 1 of this act under one municipal government. Within ten days after the votes upon said question of consolidation shall have been canvassed and returned, the Secretary of State shall make and file a certificate in his office of the result of said vote of each city, county, village, town, or part of a town included within the territory mentioned in the first section of this act.

Sec. 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

Mr. Green told the commission there were abundant and evident signs that the sentiment in favor of the "greater New-York" was strongly and rapidly growing among the people. He looked on the result of the recent elections hereabout as showing there was now a far greater probability of success for consolidation before the Legislature and the people.

Mr. Linton moved the adoption by the commission of the bill presented by President Green.

Mr. Greenfield, representing Staten Island, said he thought it would be a good plan to insert the word "villages" in the bill among the list of subdivisional communities. This was assented to, and the word was inserted.

The venerable First Citizen of Brooklyn praised the new bill as warmly as had President Green. He stated that the bill which was to be submitted to the Legislature would have no binding effect on that body. It would merely afford the public an opportunity to be heard on the vital question of consolidation. The commission, Mr. Stranahan said, was entirely willing to be bound by the wishes of the people in this matter. It would be glad to receive suggestions from the people, in the shape of modifications or alterations of the existing bill.

"We want," Mr. Stranahan said, "the fullest scrutiny of the bill and the greatest possible discussion of its features. We are willing to have the bill modified or altered to suit the wishes of the people."

"The bill is intended merely as a recommendation to the Legislature."

Mr. Devoe moved that the three men who drafted the bill, together with Mr. Greenfield, should be named a committee to present the bill to the Legislature, and urge its adoption. This motion was adopted.

James A. Townsend of Bay Ridge was introduced to the commission. Bay Ridge is in New-Utrecht, and is under the domination of Cornelius Furgueson. For some time the decent people of New-Utrecht have been disgusted with their political "boss," and have been seeking to deliver themselves by getting New-Utrecht annexed to Brooklyn or New-York.

"We want to be annexed to somebody or something pretty quick," Mr. Townsend said. "The question is, 'Who to,' or 'What to.' Bay Ridge is populated largely by New-York business men, who go home every night to sleep. They want to sleep and do business, not under different governments, but under the same government."

"We have had a meeting, and we all favor annexation, but we don't know what to do, and we have come to you to find out the best course to pursue. When we learn what is best for us to do, we will do it. I feel confident when the question of annexation to New-York comes to a vote, fully 75 per cent. of our people in New-Utrecht will hold up both hands. We are heartily in favor of the scheme."

Mr. Stranahan said he was glad to hear such an expression of opinion from a resident of New-Utrecht. The First Citizen advised Mr. Townsend that the best course for him, and for his fellow citizens, to pursue was to let the New-Utrecht representative in the Legislature know their views, and the importance to them of his favoring the present bill to give the people a chance to vote on the question of annexation.

Secretary Henschel was instructed to represent the Consolidation Commission at a mass meeting on annexation to be held at Stracks's Casino, Ravenswood, L. I., Dec. 21. Secretary Henschel will present facts and figures to the meeting in favor of the "greater New-York."

The commission adjourned, subject to the call of the Chairman.